SERMONS
FOR CHILDREN.

Peabody.

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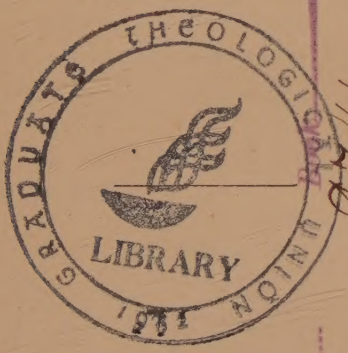
SERMONS

FOR CHILDREN.

BY

REV. A. P. PEABODY.



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SERMON I.

HOW TO BE RELIGIOUS.

PSALM iv. 11: "Come ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

THERE is a class of our congregation which has been too much neglected in the common services of public worship, — I mean the children; whose patient attendance is seldom rewarded by anything directly addressed to them, or expressly designed to interest them. One of the little flock has repeatedly asked me to preach a sermon to children, and I know that I shall have their attention while I attempt to comply with a request so reasonable, and so entirely in accordance with my own feelings.

You hear more or less, children, about re-

ligion and religious people, and I suppose that some of you think it very hard for a child to be religious. You think that you will be religious when you grow up; but you have an idea that it is something too grave and serious for you now. On the other hand, I believe that the youngest child here, who is only old enough to understand me, is the very person among us all to whom it would be the easiest and most natural to be religious. Let me then show you what religion is, and how you may be religious in your childhood; and if you are religious then, you will be sure to be so as long as you live.

First, then, religion is only another name for doing right. You know and feel, every day you live, the difference between right and wrong. You feel, I have no doubt, very often, as we older persons do, as if you were drawn in two different ways at the same

time. For instance, to-morrow, before school, there may be a dozen little kindnesses that you can do for your mother or for some member of the family, if you are within call, and are willing and ready; and it is right for you to find out every way in which you can do anything for those who have been so kind to you. But if you think only of your play, you will either slip off, so as to be out of the way when you are wanted; or will object to doing what you are asked to do; or will do it so unwillingly and peevishly that you will not be asked again. So too, at school, it is right for you to be orderly, studious, and attentive to your teacher. But there will be times when you can snatch your chance to play, or to whisper; or you can be idle, and have your lesson only half learned when you are called upon to recite it. In your play-hours you know that it is right for you to be

kind, to take no part in any quarrel, to say only such words as you would be willing for your father or mother to hear. But you may be easily affronted, and may get into disputes and quarrels; and you may say and do things which you would be ashamed to have your parents hear and see. Then again, there are times when you are asked a question which you would rather not answer, or when you have done something careless or wrong which you would rather not confess; and you know that it is right for you to tell the truth. But you feel at the moment that it would be easier for you, — would save you from mortification or blame, if you should say something that is not strictly true, or should tell only a part of what is true. Now in all these things you know what is right. There is something within you — we will call it *conscience* — which tells you what you ought to do and what you

ought not to do; and there are, also, feelings within you which would lead you to do wrong, — either your love of play, or your laziness, or you fear of being blamed, or your bad temper, or your dislike for some one of your companions.

You know, too, that it often seems easier to do wrong than to do right, — that when you see clearly what you ought to do, you often have to try very hard to do it. It is hard to study or to work on a bright and beautiful day, when you know that there are children of your acquaintance at play who would be glad to have you join them. It is hard for you not to say back unkind and angry words when they are said to you, or even not to give a blow for a blow. It is very hard, sometimes, to tell the truth.

But this you also know, — that nothing makes you so happy as to do right. Other

things please you for a little while; but you soon get tired of them. You enjoy play for a while; but you have often been too tired to play any longer. You enjoy fruit, and all kinds of delicate food; but you are sooner or later satisfied, and then all the good things that could be given you would not tempt you to eat any more. And after your play is over, after your good things are eaten, you do not think of them, and feel happy as often as you think of them. But you are never tired of doing right. The more right things you do, the more you want to do. And nothing makes you so happy as to remember having done right. At night, no matter how merry you have been, or how much you have had done for you to make you happy, — if you have been disobedient, or unkind, or selfish, or quarrelsome, you go to your rest weary and cross and unhappy. But if your mother asks

you, or if you ask yourself whether you have done anything wrong during the day, and you can remember nothing but what was right, you go to sleep perfectly happy, and your last thoughts are as sweet and pleasant as thoughts can be. I do not believe that there is in the whole world a happier being than a child at the close of such a day. And when, day after day, you feel that you are growing better and more useful, that you are correcting little faults, and that you deserve more and more the love of those who love you so dearly, I am sure that you are growing happier and happier.

Now the chief difference among children is, that some always or almost always mean and try to do right, and that others mean and try to do only what will give them pleasure, or will suit their feelings at the moment. And the children that mean and try to do right are

religious children, and if they go on in the same way, will be religious men and women when they grow up; while the children that mean and try to do only what will please or satisfy them, without thinking whether it is right or not, are bad children now, however pleasant they may appear, and there is not much reason to hope that they will be good men and women; but, on the other hand, if they should be exposed to a great deal of temptation, they are quite sure to be bad men and women.

The first counsel to children then should be, Endeavor always to do right. Ask yourselves what is right, — the conscience that is within you will always tell you, — and never do what your conscience tells you is wrong.

But I have said, and you know very well, that it sometimes seems hard to do right. There is but one way in which you can make

it always easy; and that is to feel that God sees you always and always loves you, and that He, who made you and all things, looks upon you with the dearest love when you try to do what is right. I want you to feel that God is your Father, and to love him for all his goodness, and to feel that nothing can be too much or too hard for you to do to show your love for him.

But you say, "I have never seen God, — how can I love Him?" Suppose there were some friend of your parents, who lived a great way off, and whom you had never seen, who was every little while sending you kind messages and beautiful presents, would you not love that friend, even though you could not imagine how he looked? Now I want you to feel that you are enjoying every day the kind presents that God has given you. He has made you to be happy. The hand that

grasps the ball, the voice that rings in a merry shout, the feet that run so nimbly, the spirits that are so fresh and gay, and that send you back to your sports with so keen a relish, — all these God has given you. He gives you your parents, and keeps them alive that they may make you happy. He puts it into the hearts of your kind friends to love and please you. He has made the sunshine, and the flowers, and the bright river, and all the beautiful things that it is a pleasure to look upon; the fruit so delicious in its season; the ice and snow on which you slide so merrily. He makes everything beautiful in its time, and has made you so that you can enjoy everything; and not a day comes round without its pleasures for you. Now if there were some good man, who every day did only one thing to make you happy, even if he kept out of sight, would you love him any the less

because you had not seen him? Why then cannot you love the good Father, who every day does, not one thing, but thousands of things, more than you or I could tell, to make you happy?

But what if I were to say to you, "You have seen God as much as you ever saw your father or your mother"? You did not ever really see your father or your mother. You have seen their faces and forms; but they might have entirely different faces and forms, and you would love them as well; and strangers might have precisely their faces and forms, and you would not love them at all. What you love in them is that in them which loves you, their souls, their spirits; and those you never saw, and cannot see. Their souls, to be sure, have looked out to you through their eyes and countenances, have spoken to you through their voices. But God as truly

shows Himself — the beauty and loveliness of his character — in the sky, and the trees, and the fields, and the waters, as your father and mother show their characters in their faces. You see all around you what is beautiful and lovely, and seems fitted only to make you happy; why cannot you think of all this as the countenance of your Father in heaven?

Some of you have parents no longer living in this world, who loved God, and died in peace, and, you doubt not, are now in heaven; and you still can say, "I love my father or my mother." But the father or mother that you love now is not what was laid away in the grave, but the being that you never saw, which now lives in heaven. Your father or mother is now a spirit, without form, or body, or anything that you can see, yet as really alive as when the spirit had the form which you could see for its

clothing and its dwelling-place. When we say that God is a spirit, we mean nothing different from what we mean when we speak of ourselves and our friends as spirits. We are all spirits, and can no more see one another than we can see God. Your spirit and mine have very small dwelling-places, and can be only in one place at a time; and therefore we can see one another's faces and forms in their full proportions. But, because God is everywhere, we can see, as it were, only a small portion of his countenance at a time. Yet whatever we look upon that he has made shows us something of his character, and may thus help us to know and love him better.

Now what I desire that you should feel is that this great and good God is always with you, that he knows your thoughts, and hears your words, and sees your conduct.

If you feel this, you will be unwilling and ashamed, not only to say or do, but even to think what is wrong, and will love those good thoughts from which proceed pure, true, kind words and right conduct. If you will only feel what is meant in the words, "Thou God seest me," and will repeat those words to yourselves when you are tempted to do wrong, I am sure that you will be able to resist the temptation, and to do what you know to be right.

But in order to keep the thought that God sees you in your mind, you must pray. By this I do not mean merely that you must say your prayers, though I wish that you would always say them. Especially I think that we all ought to repeat the Lord's Prayer every day that we live, and the oftener we repeat it, the more shall we feel what it means. John Quincy Adams, one of the

greatest and best men that have lived in our times, said, not long before his death, that he had never gone to sleep without repeating that first simple prayer which his mother taught him,—

> "Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
> If I should die before I wake,
> I pray the Lord my soul to take";—

and I have no doubt that these four lines, which comprehend all that might be put into a very long prayer, may have done a great deal toward keeping the thought of God in his mind, and thus toward making him so good a man. But in addition to such prayers as you repeat, I would have you use words of your own, no matter how simple or how few. Remember that, when you pray, you are talking to a kind Father, who knows what a child's heart is, and is more

pleased with your simple words, if you really mean and feel them, than with the best words that could be used, if he who used them did not mean and feel them.

Pray to God every morning and evening, the first thing and the last, and it will help you to think of him at other times, and all along through the day, — so that you will, without even trying, learn to do what is meant in the Bible when it is said, "Pray without ceasing," which does not mean praying in words all the time, but the habit of thinking of God always.

Let me add, that, next to prayer, your best help in doing right, and thus in being religious, is to read and think about your Saviour, and to resolve and try to be like him. You read in the Gospels what he was. He was once a child like you; and then he was obedient and gentle, — he loved to pray,

—he loved to be in the Temple, which was the place where people met, as we do here, to worship God. He was always kind and loving, pure and holy, and he went about doing good. He never thought of his own will or his own comfort, but only how he might do what would please God, his Father and your Father. You have read of the little Jewish children whom he took in his arms, and perhaps have felt how happy, and how good too, you would be, if he were on earth now, and you were brought to him, and taken into his arms, and received his blessing. You are as dear to him as those children were. Thousands of children as young as you have gone to heaven to live with him. And he looks from heaven upon you, and hears your prayers and your hymns, and rejoices to see you good children, and will sooner or later take you where you will

see and know him, and be always with him.

There is a great deal more that I should be glad to say to you; but if you have heard all that I have now said, it is enough for you to remember.

Little children, my dear children, no one but your parents can love you more than I love you, every one of you; and I do earnestly desire to see you all growing up good, religious children. Let me beg you then to make it your daily, hourly endeavor, to do right; to obey that conscience within you which tells you what is right; to pray to God, and remember that he is always with you; and to learn of Christ how to be good. Then you will be happy while you live here, and when you die, you will go to live with Christ in that blessed and beautiful home which he has gone to prepare for all, young and old, who love him and follow him.

SERMON II.

USE AND ABUSE OF THE TONGUE.

PSALM xxxiv. 14: "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile."

CHILDREN, I have taken for my subject this afternoon the government of the tongue, and I will tell you my reasons for doing so.

You are now forming habits of talking which will be likely to last as long as you live; and these habits will affect your whole character. Let me hear a boy or girl talk, when there is no restraint from the presence of a stranger, — at home, or among playmates, — I can tell what sort of a child that boy or girl is, and what sort of a man or woman he or she is likely to become.

Then, too, your words are among the most important parts of your conduct. Among the faults and sins of bad children there are none greater than profane, vulgar, unkind, angry, or false words; and among the marks of a good child there are none that are surer tokens than telling the truth, refraining from vulgar and profane words, and speaking respectfully to older persons, gently and kindly to all.

Children, there are times when you are always careful what you say and how you speak. When you are in the company of strangers whom you respect and whose good opinion you desire, you think before you speak, — you are never loud, or coarse, or boisterous, — you take good care to say nothing improper. Now, if you will only keep in mind what you all believe, that the great God, your Father in heaven, is with you

wherever you are, and hears all you say, this thought will make you unwilling ever to say a word that ought not to come from your lips. This is a thought which I would have you bear in mind while I give you my advice. Without this thought I cannot expect that what I say will do you any good. But if you are really desirous that your words should be such as are fit for God to hear, I know that it will do some of you good to listen to me.

In the first place, let me beg you always to speak the truth. There are three ways in which you are liable to be tempted to falsehood. One is when you want to conceal an accident, or a fault, or some act of disobedience, because you are afraid of being blamed or punished for it. Even if there is danger of this, it is better to be blamed or punished for one fault than to commit two.

The lie, if you tell it, is quite sure to be found out, and will certainly give your parents more pain than anything else that you could do would give them. They know that children are children, and will make kind allowances when you do wrong without meaning to do it, if you confess it, and are sorry for it. And if you really deserve to be blamed, it is better to take the blame manfully, and resolve not to do so again. But if you tell a lie to hide your fault, you will probably have to tell another to make the first believed, and then another still, and will be at last found out; and then you will feel in your own soul a shame which will be worse than any punishment you could receive.

Another temptation which children often have is to tell a lie to hide the faults of their schoolmates. In almost every school it

is considered mean for one child to tell of another. Indeed, hardly any human being can be so mean as a telltale. It is the last practice that I would encourage. But to go to your teacher to complain of another scholar is an entirely different thing from telling the truth when you are asked. Your teacher has a right to know what any scholar can tell him ; and it is meaner, because it is wicked, to tell a falsehood to screen a schoolmate than it is to go unasked to complain of him.

Another way in which children sometimes tell falsehoods — without knowing it — is by exaggerating, by telling great stories, by representing things as more, or larger, or stranger than they really are. 'It is very pleasant to make people wonder at what we say, and all of us, young and old, are too apt to enlarge on what we see and hear. But it is a very

bad habit. When one falls into it, it makes him careless about everything that he says, and gets him into the way of saying whatever comes first into his mind, whether it be true or not. I know some men and women whose word cannot be depended upon, not because they mean to tell falsehoods, but because they are not careful what they say; and the reason is that they fell into this loose way of talking when they were children, from the desire of saying things that would surprise, or amuse, or entertain those they talked with, more than the simple truth would have done.

The child who in any of these ways tells what is not true suffers the severest punishment in not being believed when he tells the truth. And, what is still worse, he disobeys and displeases God; for he gave you the power of speaking, that you might always

speak the truth, and the Bible contains many expressions of his displeasure against falsehood, and many instances in which those who told untruths were severely punished by him.

Another subject on which I am sorry that there is any need of my speaking is the use of profane language, — using the name of God or of Christ in a light and irreverent way. I have heard such language from some boys, of whom I could not have believed such a thing had I not heard it. I always in my own mind connect falsehood and profaneness. I think that they belong together, and that one often grows out of the other, so that I should not be very ready to believe a boy who used profane language. A boy who means always to tell the truth will use plain and simple words, — will tell a straightforward story, as if he expected to be be-

lieved. But he who is not careful of the truth, and knows that he does not always deserve to be believed, when he is anxious that any one should believe what he says, will endeavor to find some very strong words to convey the assurance that he is really speaking the truth. He will begin with some of those forms of swearing which are not profane, but which lead to what is worse; and when the habit of swearing is once acquired, he will be very apt to use the same sacred names which he hears in the coarse, wicked oaths of older people. From this he soon gets to think so lightly of those names, that they fall from his lips in play or in his common talk; and even a boy no more than ten or twelve years old, a Sunday-school scholar, a child of religious parents, may be sometimes heard using language so wicked and horrible, that one would think the worst

criminal in the land might shudder to repeat it.

Children, however little you may think of it, there is no habit more sinful or more dangerous than this. If you believe that God keeps you in life and health, and surrounds you with perpetual favor and blessing, and that your lives are altogether in his hands, how can you insult him by using his name more rudely and coarsely than you would be willing to use the name even of one of your companions of your own age? If you believe that Jesus Christ, the most pure and lovely being that ever lived in this world, died on the cross to procure the greatest blessings for you and for all mankind, is there a tender or grateful feeling in your hearts which does not forbid your speaking his name in jest, or in anger, or in any way but reverently and thankfully?

You may say, indeed, that such language is a habit which you have caught from men or older boys, without knowing at the outset how wicked it was. But that does not make it harmless. You think by means of words. All your thinking is talking to yourselves. You never have a thought which does not shape itself in words as distinctly as if you were going to utter it. Now the time will come when you will want to think seriously of God and Christ, — when you will need such thoughts for your comfort in great trials and sorrows, or for your support in great temptations. But if you have been in the habit of taking their names in vain, so that they are connected in your mind with everything mean and low and ridiculous, it will be impossible for you in thought to connect these names with the great and glorious Being in whom and through whom you live,

and with the blessed Saviour who died to redeem you. The very words which would help you to comforting, happy, and strengthening thoughts will have lost all their meaning for you, and it will be to you as if the gate were shut against the consolation and support which you will most intensely need.

I suppose that there is no bad habit which leaves worse or more lasting effects upon the mind and character than profaneness. It is almost impossible for one who has been profane in early life to become a serious Christian in after years. You can see how hard this would be by supposing a similar case. Suppose there were some person with whom you were not acquainted, who was really very respectable and excellent, whom, nevertheless, you had for years heard ridiculed and been accustomed to ridicule, — whose name had been to you a jest and a by-

word. If afterwards you became acquainted with that person, would it not be very hard for you to feel as you ought toward him? Whenever his name came up, would not your first thought be of the way in which you used to speak it and to hear it spoken? Would it not take even many months and very great effort for you to regard him as really worthy of your respect and affection? I cannot help fearing that it will be so as to your Heavenly Father and your Saviour, with those who early form the habit of taking their names in vain.

To all of you, — to those who could never be induced to say a profane word, — to every boy and girl who hears me, I would say, Form simple, straightforward habits of talking. Avoid those expressions which so many children and grown people use to make their speech stronger. There is no need of your

ever swearing by anything, and all those modes of speech are swearing, if not profane swearing. They are vulgar, and on that account, if on no other, they ought to be shunned. They show that you are afraid of not being believed unless you use them, while you ought to be so careful in all you say, as to have no reason for fear that any one can doubt your word. Your Saviour says: "Let your Yes be plain Yes, and your No plain No; for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil."

I cannot speak here of other kinds of coarse, improper, vulgar language, which, I fear, are too common, and which are not only sinful now, but are among the surest means of leading you when you are older into great and shameful and ruinous sins. I would have every boy who among his playmates uses language which he would be

ashamed to have his mother and sisters hear, ask himself whether such language is fit for God to hear. If you will only remember his presence, I believe that the language of your playground will be so pure and decent, that it might be uttered with perfect propriety in your Sunday-school class.

I have spoken thus far of great sins of speech. I would now speak of some of those graces of a child's speech which are often neglected. Among the things that strike me most disagreeably is the disrespectful way in which children often speak to their parents, so very different from what was common when I was a child. There is, indeed, one very pleasant difference. Children are more familiar with their parents than they used to be. But you may be familiar without being disrespectful. A child ought never to dispute with a parent, or to set up his own

opinions or wishes in opposition to a parent's, or to tease a parent for what he does not see fit to give or to do, or to find fault with what he does. Remember always that, while it is a privilege to be able to talk with your parents as freely as you would with those of your own age about everything that interests you, it is none the less your duty to yield to their judgments and their wishes without questioning them, to treat their opinions with respect, even if you cannot help thinking differently, and to obey, in your whole intercourse with them, the command, "Honor thy father and thy mother." Always wait to hear what they wish to say, instead of cutting them short half-way by an impertinent interruption, and never give them a pettish, peevish answer.

Not only before parents, but before older persons generally, while I would not have

children bashful and afraid to speak, I would have them modest and quiet. I have sometimes been where the youngest persons present took the entire lead in the conversation, and interrupted or contradicted with the utmost freedom persons of four, five, or ten times their own age. Nothing that is not absolutely wicked can be more unbecoming than this. Of the older persons with whom you associate many deserve your respect, not for their years alone, but for superior wisdom or excellence, or for their kind interest in you and kind offices for you; and, though they may not show it, they are always troubled by the forwardness and pertness of which I am speaking. At your age you are receiving a great many kindnesses from a great many persons, and it is but little that you can do in return. You can do more in your speech and manners than in any other way.

For children especially the duty of making themselves agreeable is one of the most important duties, simply because they are generally looked upon and treated with so much kindness by their older friends, and in this way they can do more than in any other way toward making a return for the kindness they receive.

I would next speak of the importance of meekness and gentleness in your intercourse with one another. There is not one of you who would not abhor the very thought of becoming a violent, passionate, quarrelsome man or woman, — one who was always having disputes or difficulties with others, and had the reputation of being a bad neighbor and a disagreeable member of society. Persons who have this character now probably had in their childhood no worse tempers than other children who have grown up to be

peaceable, pleasant, gentle, and kind. But the difference was that these last, when they were children, would not utter violent and angry words, while the others said without restraint all that they felt. Here are two boys, who have equally quick tempers, and are often meeting with things that irritate and vex them. I will suppose that one of them thinks it wrong to be angry, to quarrel, to give back unkind words for every hasty word that is said to him. He therefore, when he is tempted to speak angrily, turns away and walks off, or waits for his temper to cool down before he speaks. He will very soon find that his temper is not so often or so easily roused as it used to be; he will not mind at all many of the things that used to vex him; he will become really gentle in spirit, so that it will be very hard to provoke him; and when he grows up, he will prob-

ably show no traces of his ever having had a quick and irritable temper. The other boy, I will suppose, never keeps his anger to himself, or waits a single moment before uttering what he feels. He gets easily into all sorts of quarrels, and a day never passes without his having disputes and high words with other boys. His tongue is continually heating up his temper. As soon as he dares, he gets to be profane, and uses fearful oaths, because any other words seem too tame. From words he passes to blows. As he grows older, he will grow more irritable, till he becomes a violent, quarrelsome, passionate man, a confirmed swearer, a bad neighbor, a bad citizen. Nay, worse, he may, in the heat of his anger, commit some outrageous crime that will fill him with shame and misery for the rest of his life.

Thus it is that your words act upon your characters. Governing your tongues is gov-

erning and subduing your temper. Meek and gentle words will make you in heart meek and gentle.

Not to speak further of anything that would be called angry or violent, I would caution you against rudeness in speech. There is nothing in children more graceful and beautiful than kind and harmonious intercourse with one another, — care never to wound one another's feelings, — the natural politeness which a loving heart will always teach. They thus make themselves and one another happy; they are preparing, when they grow older, to make all around them happy; and I am sure that such children, in their play and in their pleasant intercourse, have the love and blessing of that Saviour who was meek and gentle, kind and loving, and whom, in this respect as in so many others, they cannot begin too early to obey and follow.

Children, I have thus set before you some of the principles that ought to govern your speech now and all along through life, — and now especially, because the habits which you form as children will be likely to be your habits when you become men and women, and to the end of your days.

Let me close, as I began, by begging you to bear in mind the constant, loving presence of your Father in heaven. I trust that none of you have forgotten the duty and the privilege of an evening prayer. The best rule I can give you is, Be careful all the day long not to let a word fall from your lips which it would give you pain to remember when you repeat or offer your evening prayer.

SERMON III.

FALSE SHAME.

ROMANS i. 16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

My text was written by Paul, at a time when it was not thought respectable to be a Christian. The rich and great men of the world, the kings and rulers, the men of science and learning, were almost all of them either Jews, or worshippers of idols, or believers in no religion of any kind. Paul was very learned, had been the companion and favorite of distinguished men, and belonged, we have reason to suppose, to a rich family; but he had become a Christian, and on that account the rich people, the learned men,

the rulers, and the priests, who had before been very fond of him, had turned against him, and done everything they could to injure him. For preaching such truths as are preached in this pulpit every Sunday he had suffered everything but death. Sometimes he was whipped publicly. Sometimes he was attacked by a cruel, wicked mob, and beaten till he was almost dead. Sometimes he was put in prison among thieves and murderers. Once, for many months, he was chained to two soldiers, each of his hands fastened by a chain to the hand of one of his keepers. All these things were not only painful, but they were thought to be very shameful. It was the way in which the people of that age pretended to treat only the very worst of men, and they treated him so because they thought that he was a very bad man. They did not know, as we do, that Jesus Christ

was the Son of God, and that he came to this world to fit men for heaven. Many of them, as I said, believed in idols, and in the old religions in which their fathers had believed, and they thought that it was very wicked for Paul to say that those idols were not gods, and to preach against the religions in which so many generations of men had believed. But they could not make Paul ashamed of himself; for he knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, — he had seen Jesus and heard him speak years after he had gone to heaven, and he knew that in preaching the gospel of Christ he was doing right and doing good. Therefore he says in our text, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

Now I want you, children, while you are listening to this sermon, to remember what I have said to you about Paul, and to bear

it in mind that no one ought ever to be ashamed of doing right; for many grown men and women, and many children, are as much ashamed of doing right as they ought to be of doing wrong.

There are different sorts of shame. One sort is that which you feel when other children make unkind remarks about you, or look unpleasantly at you, or find fault with you because you will not do just as they do. Children are sometimes ashamed of the clothes which their parents see fit for them to wear, if they do not look as well, or do not cost as much, or are not cut as fashionably, as those of other children. They are ashamed of not being permitted to do just the same things that other children are permitted to do. They are ashamed of anything that makes them appear differently from the children with whom they associate. Now,

shame on account of any of these things is almost always wrong and foolish. No child ought ever to be ashamed of what his parents think proper for him to wear or to do, or of not doing what they are unwilling for him to do.

Another kind of shame is that which we feel in our own souls when we have done wrong. We are sorry. We feel that we have been foolish and wicked. We think badly of ourselves. We know that we have done what God had told us not to do; and when we say, "Our Father who art in heaven," we feel that we have not been such loving and obedient children as we ought to have been to a Father who is all the time so good to us. This is the right kind of shame. Whenever we have done wrong, we ought to feel this shame, and it is the surest possible way of preventing us from

doing wrong again. But doing wrong is the only thing that we ought ever to be ashamed of.

Now, I think that children are sometimes ashamed of doing right, and that this false and foolish shame sometimes makes them do wrong and wicked things which they would not otherwise do. I will give you an instance. When I was a child, I knew a boy who had been told by his father and mother that he ought never to quarrel, or to use angry words, or to strike another boy; but that, if the boys insulted or injured him, he ought to take it patiently, to keep out of their way if he could, and, when he had the opportunity, to do them a kindness just as if they had always been kind to him. They had read to him all that our Saviour says about returning good for evil, and how he was kind to the people that abused and in-

sulted him, and when he was on the cross prayed for his murderers. One day a smaller and weaker boy called this boy names, and said a great many things on purpose to provoke him and to make him angry. The boy remembered, that time, the good lessons he had heard at home, and took no notice of the insult. The next day the same thing occurred again; and the boy who was insulted was then ashamed of his quiet and peaceable conduct the day before, ashamed of obeying his parents and carrying into practice the good lessons they had taught him, and he sprang upon the boy who had insulted him, and not only gave him an unmerciful beating, but left marks of his violence that could be seen for many days afterward. Now what that boy was really ashamed of was the Gospel of Christ; for it was from the Gospel that his parents had taught him not to render evil for evil.

I should be surprised if there were not some boys here who have acted in nearly the same way, and for the same reason. I think that a great deal of the violent, angry, and — I am sorry to add — profane language which boys utter, a very large proportion of their quarrels, and a great many of the blows they strike, are not because they are angry, but because they are ashamed to appear mild, gentle, and peaceable. They think that unless they have voice and hand always ready for a fight, they will be called cowards ; and so they make themselves real cowards, to avoid the name. *Real cowards* I say ; for there is nothing so cowardly as doing what you know is wrong because you are afraid that some one will call your right conduct by a wrong name.

This is only one instance. Let me ask you, children, whether there are not some

of you who feel this same wrong kind of shame about other things. For example, a good many children are together, on a holiday afternoon, for a walk or a picnic. Some of them have gone from home with a very strict charge not to do certain things of which their parents disapprove. The rest of the children determine to do some one of those things. Of the children who have been forbidden, a part obey their parents, and refuse to join. But a part of them are ashamed not to join. They are afraid of being laughed at by the rest. They hang back, perhaps, for a few minutes; then something is said that makes them feel unpleasantly, and so, though with a guilty look and a real unwillingness, they join in the amusement which had been forbidden because their parents thought it dangerous or wrong. Thus they are ashamed to do right.

In the words of my text, they are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for we read in the Gospel that Christ, great and glorious as he was, when a child was obedient and dutiful to his parents; and the child who is ashamed to obey his or her parents is ashamed of what only helps to make the character of the blessed Jesus more beautiful and lovely.

I think, too, that children are sometimes ashamed to show how much they are interested in religion, in the Bible, in good books, in their Sunday-school lessons. Sometimes, in a circle of children, as is too often the case among older persons, it comes to be common and fashionable to treat religious things very lightly. They slight their Sunday-school lessons, are disorderly and noisy in their classes, and talk about the Bible and the Sabbath as if they cared very little for them. Now if there is in such a circle

of children one who really loves to read the Bible and to hear about it, who wants to remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, and who would gladly be attentive and well-behaved in Sunday-school, I think that such a child is often prevented from doing what he or she knows and feels to be right by false shame, — by the fear of being called prim, or precise, or particular, or of seeming less free and easy and indifferent than the rest. I have sometimes watched such a child in the midst of such a group, and in the child's face and whole manner I could see the two opposite feelings working, — on the one hand, a strong sense of what was right and proper; on the other hand, a desire not to seem different from the rest of the children, or to be laughed at or found fault with by them. Now conduct of this kind is being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, —

being ashamed of religion, ashamed of good things, ashamed of being good.

There is another form of this wrong shame, which is, I fear, common among men and women, and which I have sometimes seen among children. Suppose, my boy, that you are one of a party of boys that propose to do something which you know to be very wrong, — something mischievous, or cruel, or insolent, or dishonest. It is so bad that you are determined at all events to have nothing to do with it. So, when you find that they are resolved to go, you leave them, as you ought; but, instead of telling the real reason why you leave them, you say that you have something else to do, or are engaged to go somewhere else, or you invent some excuse that will make them think you find no fault with them. You are ashamed to say right out, "I will not do this because I know it is

wrong," which is what you ought to say. If you would at such a time say this, it would be very likely to break up the whole plan; for there are probably in the company other boys who feel as unwilling as you to take part in it, and one strong, courageous voice saying, "No, I will not," would give them courage to say the same. Now when you are ashamed to call what is wrong wrong, and what is wicked wicked, you are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for one of the best things that his Gospel does for us is to open our eyes to what is wrong and wicked, so that we may hate and avoid it.

I would not have a child, nor yet a man or woman, make a show of his goodness; for whenever man or woman, boy or girl, seems anxious to make such a show, I generally think that it is all show. But when you are asked to do anything, or to take

part in anything, which you know to be wrong, it is no more than simple truth and honesty for you to say, "No, I will not, because I ought not."

This, also, is the only safe course; for, if you are ashamed to give your real reason for not doing wrong, the time may soon come when you have no excuse at hand, and then this same false shame will drive you to the very conduct of which you had wanted and tried to keep clear.

The counsel, then, which I would urge upon you, is: Never be ashamed of doing right. Do what you know you ought to do, whether other children do the same or differently, — whether they like you for it or laugh at you for it. Never be ashamed of giving the real reason for what you do or for what you refuse to do. If you think anything wrong, call it wrong; if you think

anything wicked, call it wicked. Never be ashamed to show all the respect and love you feel for the Bible and the Sabbath-day, for the church and the Sunday-school. Never be ashamed to have it known that you really wish and mean to be a dutiful child of your Heavenly Father, that you dare not knowingly disobey him, and dare not take his name in vain. Be ashamed of nothing but what is wrong; and be ashamed of that, not because other people know it, but because God sees and knows it, — because it is sin against the Father in Heaven who loves you better than you can love yourself. But of what is right and good never be ashamed, even though the whole world were against you, as it was against your blessed Saviour when he was on the earth.

By being ashamed of nothing but what is wrong and wicked now that you are chil-

dren, you enter, as far as children can, into the meaning of those noble words which I have taken for my text; and, as you grow older, and have more opportunities of showing how much you delight and glory in all that is good, you will be able to say, in very much the same sense in which Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

In conclusion, my dear children, let me beg you to remember that there is one Being in the universe before whom you ought to dread being ashamed, and that, whenever you are ashamed to do right, you have reason to feel ashamed before him. Think one moment. The pointing of a school-boy's finger, or two or three idle words which in five minutes the child who said them would have forgotten, may make you strike an angry blow, or disobey your parents, or perform some act which you all the while know is

very wrong. But when you do this, there is upon you the unseen, all-seeing eye of the Father in Heaven, whose commandment you have been willing to disobey rather than be laughed at, or pointed at, or talked about for a minute or two, — and that Father always kind and merciful to you, bestowing upon you thousands of gifts and blessings every hour of your lives. Is not this something to be really ashamed of? something for which you cannot find any excuse? But if you will say and do just what you know and feel to be right, then you can look up to heaven, and be sure that your Father's eye rests lovingly upon you, — that he owns you for his good child, — that he is well pleased by your readiness always to obey him.

Children, I want you to keep what I have now said in your memory, and to think it

over and over; for you cannot imagine of how much importance it may be to you as you grow older. O, I cannot tell you how many have been utterly ruined simply by being ashamed to do right when they were among those who did wrong. When you go from home, and are exposed to the temptations of the great world, it will be worth to you more than all things else, even more than the very best feelings and habits beside, for you to have learned to say sincerely, "I am not and I never will be ashamed of what is right, ashamed to obey God, ashamed to keep out of the way of wrong and evil, ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

SERMON IV.

MEMORY.

EZEKIEL xvi. 61: "Then shalt thou remember thy ways."

I AM going to preach to you, children, on a subject which is more important, and ought to be more interesting to you, than to those who are older. I will introduce my subject by telling you of a conversation that I had a few days ago. I called, one afternoon, on an old lady between eighty and ninety years of age. She had been for many years a Christian, and, as she talked about death, she expressed no fear, but the assurance that she was going home to her Saviour. After we had conversed for a while on the blessed-

ness of this hope, she commenced telling me how all the events of her early life were coming back to her mind in her old age. Said she, "There is nothing that I ever did when I was a child that I do not think of now. Things that I had not been reminded of for many years come as fresh to me as if they had happened only yesterday. I once was visiting with my mother, when I was not more than four or five years old, and seeing on the floor a little ring that struck my fancy, I picked it up, and hid it in my dress. It was the only thing not my own that I ever took in all my life. It was only a curtain-ring, worth almost nothing. But I knew it was wicked for me to take it, and I felt very guilty at the time. After I grew up and for a great many years, I do not know that I ever thought of it. But since I have been old and palsied, it keeps coming

into my mind, and you cannot imagine how much trouble it gives me."

Now this old lady's mind, I suppose, had grown weak, though she talked very sensibly; and, perhaps, had not her mind been weak, so little a thing at so very early an age would not have distressed her. But you and I are as likely as she was to have our minds weakened when we grow old, and to be troubled by things that we should not think of in our younger and stronger days.

What I want to speak to you of is the power of memory, and the happiness or misery which it may give you. Only a part of you will live to grow old; but you are all, I have no doubt, expecting to live a great many years, and you would be unwilling to do anything now that would make you unhappy in your old age.

While you are children, you do not think

much of what has taken place. What you did last year, or last month, or last week, does not often come into your minds. The reason is that you are looking forward, all the time, to what you are going to do or to enjoy, — to your next holiday, your next vacation, your next birthday, next Christmas, or the time when you will be a great boy or a great girl, a man or a woman. So, if you have done anything wrong, very wrong, it seems as if you forgot it after a little while ; or if anything very sad takes place, you shed a few tears, and it is all over. So it will be when you grow up, and all through the busy part of your life. There will always be so much to look forward to, that you will not think a great deal of the past.

But should you grow old, you will then have little or nothing to look forward to, and you will take but little interest in what

is going on around you. Your thoughts will keep going back to your youth and childhood. You will remember everything that you did when you were young. This is always the case with old people. They are sometimes said to lose their memory; but it is only things that have taken place in their old age that they forget. I never saw one who did not remember all about his early days, though I have seen many who could not recollect what they had seen or heard half an hour before. They remember what they learned when they were children, and I have often known aged persons to take the greatest comfort in repeating hymns which they had learned seventy or eighty years ago. They remember their conduct when they were children. If they were good children, — obedient, kind, and gentle, true in their words, honest and faithful in whatever

was intrusted to them, — it gives them comfort to think of it. If they were bad, disobedient, stubborn children, they cannot help thinking of it, and the recollection is painful. They may feel that God has forgiven them; yet these things will crowd in upon their memory, and they cannot get rid of them.

Now many people think a great deal of laying up money for their old age, though it is by no means certain that they can keep it, there are so many ways in which money is lost even when it seems to be safe. But you can all lay up for your old age property which cannot be lost, — property of which you will be sure to enjoy the benefit if you live. I mean what you lay up in your memory. You can obey your parents, and speak the truth, and be kind to all around you, and keep your promises. You can keep the thought that God sees you always in

your minds, and can pray to him to make you better and better children every day that you live. If you do these things, they will be worth more to you in your old age than all the money you could have would be without them. If you should be in a prosperous and affluent condition, they will give you more comfort than money could buy for you ; if you should be poor, they will make you feel rich.

Then, too, what things you learn now and commit to memory will be a very great comfort to you, if you live to be old. New thoughts will not come to you as fast as they do now. You will not recollect what you read and hear as you do now. But the hymns that you learn now you will be able to repeat then. The Bible lessons that you learn now will be perfectly fresh in your mind. And those hymns and Bible lessons

will make you feel, as nothing else can, that your Heavenly Father is with you, and that a blessed home in heaven is made ready for you.

But the faults and sins of your childhood will also be sure to come up to your minds then to trouble you. The wrong things you do now, the bad habits you form now, your disobedience, or falsehood, or profane words, or unkind acts, — there is none of these, which, should you grow old, you will not remember. You will not be able to keep them out of your minds. They will haunt you and make you unhappy. If you are really good in your old age, you will be sorry that you were not good in your childhood, and will wish that you had your lives to live over again, that you might have something more pleasant to think of in your latter years.

But you may think that I am carrying

you forward too far in asking you, children, to provide for the time when you shall be old and gray-headed. I cannot help it, I have talked with so many old people, and know so well how they feel; and very often, when I have had a long conversation with an old man or woman about his or her childhood, I have said to myself, "How I wish that all the children of my acquaintance could hear this!"

But, as I have already said, there are only a few of you who will live to be old. There are other times, however, when you will need to have pleasant memories of your early days to give you comfort. Whenever any very great disappointment or trouble comes, the future for a while looks dark, and men and women think of their past lives, and are happy or wretched, according as their lives have been good or bad.

Let me give you two instances of this kind out of the Bible. You all have read the story of Joseph, — how his brothers stripped him of his clothes, and sold him for a slave, and made his father believe that he had been torn in pieces by a wild beast. A great many years afterward they went to Egypt to buy corn, and they were all shut up in prison, and were afraid that they might never be permitted to go home again. Then it seems as if the very first thing they thought of was the great sin they had committed so long ago. "They said one to another, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.'"

The other instance is that of Job. He had been very rich, prosperous, and happy. But he suddenly lost all his property; his

children all died; he was afflicted with a painful disease; and it seemed as if there were nothing for him to look forward to in this world. But he had been a good man, and now, in the midst of trouble, hear how he comforts himself: — "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. . . . . I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor." Remembering all these things, he felt that God had not ceased to love him, and that there were yet happy days in store for him.

It is more than probable, children, that there will be times in your lives when you

will meet with misfortune and trouble; and at such times I know that you will look back to earlier days, — to your childhood and youth. If you then remember what is wrong and evil, it will make you feel as if you richly deserved all that has befallen you, and as if you had little or nothing to hope in the future. But if you can remember that you have always meant and endeavored to do right, you will feel that God intends that the trouble through which you are passing shall do you good, and you will have courage to hope and strive for better fortune.

There is the greatest possible difference in the way in which different people bear sickness, or the loss of property, or any kind of misfortune; and one chief reason of the difference is that some then remember only what it is pleasant to remember, while others

are reminded that, while they were happy, they did not deserve to be happy.

You all, if you live long enough, will meet with more or less trouble of various kinds, even though your lives may seem happy. Especially, there is one form of trouble, which, in the natural course of events, must come upon you, unless you die very young, and that is the death of friends. I know of no time when we so much need the comfort which memory can give us as when parents, brothers, sisters, or familiar associates are taken away. You may think it strange, but nothing is more true, than that those who love their friends the most tenderly bear their loss the best. The reason is, that they have everything pleasant to remember, — no bitterness, or quarrelling, or neglect to look back upon. On the other hand, where friends have not lived happily

together, everything unkind that has ever been said or done comes fresh to the minds of those still living, when one of their number dies. Things that had seemed to pass entirely out of their thought are now remembered as if they had happened only yesterday, and a bad conscience makes their grief bitter.

Most of all is this the case with children who have been undutiful and disobedient. I have never known such grief at a father's or a mother's death, as I have seen manifested by children who had been disrespectful or unkind to their parents, or who had given them constant trouble by their misconduct. One of the most painful remembrances of my early childhood is that of a grown-up daughter, who had in her selfishness neglected her duty to her infirm mother, refusing to do what she could and ought to

lighten her burdens, and who, on her mother's death, almost lost her reason, and fell into a profound melancholy which lasted for years, and left its traces on her countenance for life.

In a circle of brothers and sisters, the more closely and happily they are united, the greater is their consolation whenever they are separated by death. If they have lived in mutual love and kindness, they have nothing to mourn except the event that separates them, and they can look forward in their grief to the glad time when those who have enjoyed so much together shall be united again in heaven, and shall be one family forever. But when the members of a family have not lived happily together, and the survivors have not always been kind to the one that dies, they then feel the wrong that they have said and done; and if the lifeless form

could only hear and speak, how gladly would they kneel down by its side, and beg to be forgiven! But no words of forgiveness can come from those still, cold lips, and the feeling in the hearts of those yet living almost is as if they never could be forgiven. God, indeed, will forgive them, if they are sincerely sorry; but for their whole lives they will long in vain for some token that they are forgiven by the one to whom they had been unkind.

What I have said is in great part true as to those not of our own families. I think that, if you had quarrelled with one of your schoolmates, or treated him ungenerously or unkindly, or had merely expressed your unpleasant feelings toward him, in case of his death you would never cease to remember what you had said or done that gave him pain, and it would grieve you as long as

you lived, whenever anything occurred to remind you of him. Now, liable to death as all of every age are at all times, I would advise you never to let such remembrances as this be possible. At home, by obedience and respect, kindness and gentleness, — in whatever society you may be, by living peaceably and pleasantly with all, by doing all the good you can, and by never letting yourselves be drawn into quarrels or difficulties of any kind, — prepare for the time when death must separate all your friends and acquaintance from you, one by one, or you from them all.

I have spoken of death. The most important thing of all that can be said about memory relates to the life after death. When we find how long things are remembered in this world, and how strangely they come up again after they have been forgotten for

many years, we cannot doubt that after death we shall have a clear remembrance of everything that we have ever said or done, and of everything that ever happened to us. And we must then see things as they really are. What has been good in us we shall see and know as having the approval of our God and our Saviour; and we shall clearly see how displeasing to God was whatever of wrong and evil and sin there has been in our lives. I cannot but think that, when we wake from death to the life in which we shall never die, our whole earthly lives will be, as it were, spread out before us, and we shall be happy or miserable according as that picture is bright or dark. O how we shall then wish that there were no dark spots in it, no tokens of bad passions or bad habits, wrong words or wrong actions! How we shall then wish that we had begun right, that our child-

hood had been full of all that makes childhood beautiful and lovely, and that, from our earliest days to the day of our death, there had been no great sins or gross faults, and a constant growth from good to better, and on to better still!

I have now told you, children, what I am sure you will want in old age, in the times of trouble that come to all, at the death of friends, and when you yourselves shall die; and that is the remembrance of right feelings and good lives, of love to God and love to one another, — such memories as you must begin to lay up now, that you may have a fuller and fuller store of them every year, and that, after having been your most blessed treasure in all your times of earthly trial, they may at length be a treasure laid up for you in heaven.

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